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ABSTRACT

A persistent problem confronting the teacher of the culturally different child is the need for finding learning materials that the child can relate to and utilize in his learning situation. The increasing availability of mass-produced learning materials for these children, although helpful, has not solved the problem of providing socioeconomically and/or culturally deprived children with a sufficient number and variety of learning aids. The more options provided for both teachers and children, the better the chance that the learning activities of the culturally different will be meaningful and helpful to them. Preservice and in-service training of teachers can be oriented toward creative teaching styles via involvement in creative teaching development. Activity-oriented teacher training is a substantive way to initiate new forms of teacher behavior. This paper makes various suggestions for activity-oriented college classes for training teachers to work with the culturally different child. (Author/DDO)

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DEVELOPING CREATIVE MATERIALS FOR TEACHING THE CULTURALLY DIFFERENT CHILD

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DEVELOPING CREATIVE MATERIALS

FOR TEACHING THE CULTURALLY DIFFERENT CHILD

A persistent problem confronting the teacher of the culturally different child is the need for finding relevant learning materials that the child can relate to and utilize in his learning situation. The increasing availability of mass-produced learning materials for these children, although helpful, has not solved the problem of providing socio-economically and/or culturally deprived children with a sufficient number and variety of learning aids. The more options provided for both teachers and children the better the chance that the learning activities of the culturally different will be meaningful and helpful to them.

The research on child development indicates a high correspondence between abstract-symbolic learning skills and concrete-experiential contacts by the child during the early years of life. The immediacy of the environment and the context of that environment seems to stimulate social learning and language development in the preschool child. The use of gradual extension of the social world in pictorial or concrete form is one way of providing the culturally different child with a new medium of thinking and feeling.

The familiar and the unfamiliar are best internalized by children when they can actively manipulate the components of two distinct worlds - the world of the known and the world of the unknown. Active manipulation leads to familiarization and internalization, involving children in synthesis-forming activities.

Pre-service and in-service training of teachers can be oriented toward creative teaching styles via involvement in creative teaching development. Actively involved in developing, implementing, and evaluating creative learning packages, teachers are more likely to use these learning packages and the skills they have acquired in their classrooms. Activity oriented teacher training is a most substantive way to initiate new forms of teacher behavior. It has the added attraction of being flexible, humanistic, relevant, and promotes a harmonious blend of the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

The presenters of this smorgasbord session, proponents and practitioners of activity oriented teacher education, put forth for your consideration the following:

Student-made materials for use with the culturally different, some of which are merely examples of things the child himself might make. Others are learning aids to be prepared by the teacher education student.

A short listing of activities the presenters have used with their college students that other teacher educators might consider trying.

A proposal of an approach to educating pre- and in-service teachers to work with the culturally different child.

A brief, selected bibliography of literature teacher educators might find beneficial for themselves and for their students.

At a time when American education is mobilizing itself to humanistically meet the demands of a diverse society, it is imperative that the creative talents of the culturally different not be ignored, or they may lie dormant for a time, later to emerge as a culturally destructive force. Teacher educators must place high priority on training humanistic, competent teachers for the culturally different of our society.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITY-ORIENTED COLLEGE CLASSES

College Experiences

Students utilize collages to illustrate poetry, quotes, songs, etc., both orginal and otherwise. These may take the form of posters, mobiles, bulletin boards, book covers, etc. Often they are group efforts, perhaps among college students, perhaps including children.

Community Involvement

This may take the form of attendance at city council meetings, school board meetings, PTA, Model Cities programs, visiting the city jail, etc., or it may mean direct involvement in a community betterment project. This activity puts the college student out where the people are, enabling him to relate his classroom instruction to the real world outside the academic community.

Creative Journals or Diaries

Given few guidelines, allowed to follow their own creative instincts, students create journals or diaries of what they are doing and/or learning in a particular class, activities with children, etc. These take many forms, some being almost entirely illustrative, some including original drawings, photos, prose, verse, some containing very little in words, yet reflecting a great deal of thought and involvement. More personalized than the written report or term paper, the creative journal or diary makes wide provision for individual differences in perception and communication.

Environmental Education

Actual use of the environment to teach college students, thus modeling possibilities for their work with children. Rural and/or urban environments may be utilized in a variety of ways. Recently one group of some fifty SIU-C students, accompanied by forty fifth-graders, spent a cold, wintery day outdoors where activities included such things as: hiking, interaction with several species of animals, a hayride, making lye soap over an open fire. preparing meals over that same fire, body-spelling, branding, etc. No amount of reading about the values of field trips, the use of the environment, activity-centered education, etc., could have affected those college students in quite the same way as an elementary school child saying, "It's the best field trip I ever had - you were a great partner."

Learning Kits

Putting together in a shoe box or baggie materials that students can use individually or in small groups for a learning experience, preferably without teacher direction. This enables the teacher to individualize instruction and to juggle several activities at once, perhaps giving small-group instruction at the same time most students are using the learning kits. College students often work at mass production in small groups, swapping learning kits, thus leaving the class with several different kits, yet only having to come up with one idea, then duplicate it for each member of the group.

Meet Your Administrators

At student request an informal meeting (with refreshments and music in an informal setting) was held so students could meet their college administrators. This accomplished a dual purpose - students learned that their administrators were human-beings working to provide them with a better education, administrators were given the opportunity to interact with real, live, typical students with an assortment of concerns and problems. This has been done, at student request, two quarters now, and students and administrators report it a valuable experience.

Movie Making

Using a small, home-type movie camera, students can make films at a relatively small cost. These can be illustrative of a theme or concept they wish to present, or they may be of children at work and/or play. It is fun to occasionally make movies of your class at work and play, then have a showing in one of your last class periods at the end of the quarter of semester.

Peer Developed Activity Booklets

Often we encourage students to individually develop units or activity booklets; rarely do we do this as a part of the classroom procedure. The authors have used class time and independent study time to involve peer teams in developing and writing such booklets. The students then take them out into the field for application.

Pictures as the Medium

Use of pictures to illustrate audio tapes; mounting pictures to use with children to stimulate storytelling; use of pictures in collages, illustrted books and poetry; use of pictures to illustrate family trees; making pictures that tell your own story.

Relating to Children

This may be done in a myriad of ways - tutoring sessions; volunteering in a day-care center, the local Head Start, YMCA, etc.; a big brother program in the community; in schools, public or private; through institutions. The idea is to get to know what children are like, how and what they think, and how they react.

Self-Instruction

Teacher educators encourage pre- and in-service teachers to utilize self-instruction procedures with children. Set up such behavior models in your teacher education program. The authors have developed several such modules using such varied media as; microfilm, slides, booklets, programmed leaflets, and a variety of other materials. This is an excellent technique in a competency based program, helps teachers manage time, and allows teacher education students to experience self-instruction in action.

Sensitivity to the Self-Concept

Activities which make students more aware of their own self-concept and the importance of the self-concepts of their future students are well worth the instructional time. One of their greatest benefits is that they encourage class communication and a feeling of community within the college class. There are many such activities - a typical one might be to have the college students break into groups of six to eight people during one of the first class sessions. Students take turns introducing themselves and telling what their strongest points are. (Students find this embarrassing, yet intellectually agree that we should be positive to those around us and about ourselves.) Communication in small groups assists instructors in quickly building class togetherness. Another technique is to have students write what they wish to be called with a felt-tip pen on a 3x5 card the first day of class. On the back of the card write three adjectives that could be used to describe them. You get to know something about the student by the adjectives he chose. Students tape cards to their desks for each class period, class sits in a circle to discuss topics, thus can speak directly to one another by name quickly. Many activities can be used to awaken students to the importance of being known as an individual, quickly, in a classroom setting.

Student/Faculty Interaction

This may be a function of one faculty member with his students - college students appreciate faculty members who care enough about them to get to know them as personalities outside the classroom, or it may be an opportunity for a group of students to get to know several members of the faculty. An entire department may invite their students, and perhaps those interested in becoming their students, to come to an informal get-together where they may come to know one another. This is especially good in a department where there are so many faculty members that students will pass through the program without having had courses with all the faculty members. Such an informal interaction session might give a student an idea about what faculty members he would especially like to get as a teacher in a course he takes.

Team Teaching Procedures

College instructors too often lecture on the value and techniques of team teaching, yet the student is never able to actually observe team teaching in action. The authors hace team taught an introductory course in education, and have on numerous occasions teamed, thus giving their students the opportunity to actually see teaming in action. Often when a student could not fine one of the profes ors, the other seemed a perfectly satisfactory substitute. Some students related more closely to one than to the other professor, of course, but it was

the opinion of the authors that they were not only enriched personally and professionally by teaming, but that their students gained from the experience, also. Students can also benefit form teaming on projects, peer teaching, etc.

Tape/Slide Presentations

It is cliche to say a picture is worth a thousand words, but it is, just the same. Multiple learning experiences can come from such an activity, one of which was illustrated during this smorgasbord session. Not only can particular concepts be made visual, but the social learnings that take place in the process of first preparing, later discussing the presentations, are myriad.